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Baton Rouge doctor who ran pill mill – 'drug dealer in a white coat' – gets 15 years in prison

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'Crime of the Century' Key art and still images from the HBO Max Documentary. 'A Searing Investigation Revealing The Inner Working Dollar Industry Behind The Opioid Epidemic,' It debuted May 10. (HBO Max/TNS) ORG XMIT: 16063633W

HBO Max

As he sentenced Randy Lamartiniere to 15 years in prison, a federal judge told the disgraced Baton Rouge doctor that he shared the blame in the death of a patient to whom he illegally prescribed pain pills.

Lamartiniere was convicted of 20 counts of unlawful distribution of controlled substances at the end of a five-day trial in December. The former physician — once described by federal prosecutors as a “drug dealer in a white coat” — wore orange jail scrubs when he appeared inside the Middle District courthouse for sentencing Thursday.

“As you stand here today, you stand before the court, Mr. Lamartiniere, with blood on your hands,” Judge Brian Jackson said moments before imposing his sentence.

Jackson ordered Lamartiniere to federal prison for 15 years followed by three years of probation on each of the counts. Lamartiniere, 64, will serve sentences on all 20 counts simultaneously.

Shackled at his hands and feet, the white-haired defendant appeared to scoff at the allegations for which jurors found him guilty. He shook his head in contempt and looked to the ceiling of the courtroom, letting out deep sighs, as prosecutors outlined the facts of the case.

At one point, Jackson briefly interrupted the hearing to chide Lamartiniere for rolling his eyes and making incredulous facial expressions.

The judge focused on the overdose of Lamartiniere’s former patient, who was found dead in his bedroom with three empty bottles of oxycodone that the defendant prescribed lying next to him. Jackson said he considered applying a second-degree murder enhancement to Lamartiniere’s sentence, which would’ve increased his maximum sentence to as much as 30 years and five months.

He acknowledged that the enhancement was a “close call” and indicated he opted against imposing it out of discretion.

“It is clear to see that the defendant acted in a way that was reasonable to foresee a death could occur,” Jackson said. “He was reckless and went and acted without regard to the life and safety of others.”

Lamartiniere prescribed thousands of highly addictive opioid pills to patients, many of whom showed no signs of pain, between March 2015 and January 2016, prosecutors said. They say he ignored obvious signs of opioid addiction and continued writing prescriptions for “member” patients that paid him \$100 to \$300 in cash per visit.

He was eventually fired from his high-paying job at the Ochsner Health Center clinic on Jefferson Highway because of the volume of pills he prescribed.

Court records show Lamartiniere kept writing scripts for morphine, oxycodone, pharmaceutical fentanyl and other opioids, even after the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners issued him an emergency order in November 2015, suspending him and stripping him of his license to prescribe controlled substances.

U.S. District Judge John deGravelles presided over a four-day bench trial in December 2021. But, as he was preparing a ruling, his son took a job at the Baton Rouge law firm that had a lawyer representing Lamartiniere. DeGravelles recused himself a mistrial was declared; Lamartiniere opted to have a jury hear his second trial.

Defense attorney Beau Brindley told Jackson he will continue representing Lamartiniere in post-conviction proceedings and plans to appeal the sentence as well as the jury's December verdict. He sought to depict Lamartiniere as a compassionate caregiver who got in over his head administering pill orders.

"We have before us here a person that I think is a good person," Brindley said. "I think his pain management practice got out of his control and that's what brings us here."

Lamartiniere alluded to his 35-year career as an internal doctor and hospital physician, saying he's dedicated his life to helping hundreds of people in pain. He described the toll of the past seven years with a federal drug case looming over him. He told the judge he's lost everything from his house, marriage, medical license, former life and now his freedom.

"I have never knowingly done anything to harm any patients," Lamartiniere said, indicating his trust was abused by some of the people in his care.

That seemed to rile Jackson, who told Lamartiniere it was his duty to ensure a high standard of care for the patients he treated.

"Your misconduct was utterly appalling," the judge said. "You have to audacity to come before me and talk about the sacrifices you've made...You acted in a way that would've been obvious to anyone was unlawful. You were placing the public, and specifically your patients, in harm's way."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul L. Pugliese, the government's lead prosecutor in the case, told the judge the amount of controlled substances Lamartiniere distributed was the equivalent of up to 10 kilograms of heroin and 40 kilos of cocaine. He chipped away at the notion that the doctor was just trying to help people he believed were in pain.

"If a patient didn't pay, then they didn't get a prescription," Pugliese said.

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